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Frontispiece.

Objects connected with Superstition.

1. Abacus. 2. Bamboo Basket, and 2A. Iron Tongs, used by Paper Collector.
3. Bamboo Brushes. 4. Sky Lamps. 5. "One Good" Tablet. 6. Eel Trap.
7. Mount T'ai Stone Pillar. 8. Stuffed Tiger. 9. Demon-Capturing Rings.
10. Jars for Sealing up Demons. 11. The Marriage Telescope.

Chinese Superstitions

BY

J. VALE

LONDON: CHINA INLAND MISSION,
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INTRODUCTION.

THE least observant traveller in China quickly learns that the Chinese are a very superstitious race.

If he travels by boat, he soon discovers that a "lucky day" must be secured before the boatmen can be persuaded to move, no matter how pressing the traveller's business may be. If he secures the services of a carter, a barrowman, or sedan coolie, he is early face to face with some of their superstitions, which may cause delay, misunderstanding, or even revolt, in his camp! The southern provinces of China are said to be much more superstitious than the northern, and the western provinces, especially Si-chuen, more superstitious than either. The Si-chuen proverb, that "Si-chuen is an evil spirit region, where truth lies dead, and falsehood rules the reason," seems to bear this out.

Having chosen "Chinese Superstitions" as a subject for a Paper to be read before the Chentu Association, I naturally turned to various authorities on China to see what others had done in this line, and I was somewhat surprised to find how little had been written on this subject. True, Doolittle, Dyer Ball, and others, had done something, but I found no collection of Chinese superstitions; only isolated notices scattered through the works of various writers on China and the Chinese. It need hardly be said that in no sense have I attempted to exhaust this subject in the present collection. I have

simply collected and arranged a number of the more prominent superstitions which have fallen under my notice, leaving the task of writing an exhaustive work on this subject to some future hand.

Although the superstitions herein described were collected in Western China, yet many of them are common to all the eighteen provinces, and generally believed in by the Chinese race.

If the reading of this booklet leads to a better understanding of the mental and spiritual darkness and superstition of the Chinese people, the time spent on its preparation will not have been in vain.

J. VALE.

LONDON.



CHINESE SUPERSTITIONS.

By JOSHUA VALE.

For convenience of treatment the subject is divided into two parts, viz. :—

I.—SUPERSTITIONS CONFINED TO CERTAIN CLASSES OF SOCIETY.

II.—SUPERSTITIONS COMMON TO ALL CLASSES.

Under the first division brief reference is made to some superstitions common among boatmen, chair-coolies, miners, tradesmen, etc.

Under the second I have gathered together a miscellaneous collection of superstitions, and arranged them under three heads, viz. :—

1. Old wives' superstitions.
2. Superstitions in connection with sickness and disease.
3. Superstitions in connection with marriages, births deaths and burials.

PART I.—SUPERSTITIONS CONFINED TO CERTAIN CLASSES OF SOCIETY.

Under this heading have been selected a few of the more prominent classes, such as boatmen, coolies, tradesmen, etc., etc., the less prominent being left to be dealt with in the second part.

BOATMEN'S SUPERSTITIONS.

One of the first superstitions in connection with boatmen which strikes the newcomer to China, is their belief in "lucky" and "unlucky" days. Every boat captain about to start on a journey, ascertains which is a lucky day for casting anchor; and though he may only move a few hundred yards on that day, his heart is set at rest as to the success of the journey itself. In connection with the casting of the anchor there is also the sacrificing of the "cock" to the god of the river amid the firing of crackers, and the beating of the gong.

Another boatman's superstition is connected with whistling, and howling, for the wind. Boatmen, too, are very superstitious about fixing the place for anchoring at night. If you make inquiry about this, you rarely get a decided answer, as he supposes that to name the place is unlucky, and some accident may happen in consequence. Women are not allowed to enter a boat over the bow, but always from the side. No one is allowed to stand on the extreme end of the boat at the bow, as this is the place occupied by "the river god." Any one unwittingly doing this is liable to a fine of a "meat dinner" for all hands!

Boatmen consider it unlucky to count the number of persons on a boat, as some may be missing before the journey's end in consequence. Most foreigners break this rule immediately they start on a journey, as they are anxious to see that the captain has the full number of his crew. Many of the names of articles in use on a boat are changed if the sound has anything at all unlucky connected with it; for instance, no word with the sound of *fan*, to "overturn," must be used for fear that that calamity should happen to the boat. For the same reason no boatman will use the verb *tao*, to "pour out,"

or *tao*, "tumble over," but always substitutes the word *ch'uiin*. A vegetable much used by boatmen is called *wong-ts'ai*, which sound is very unlucky because the word to "engulf" or "submerge" is *wong*; therefore, the name of this vegetable is changed to *t'en-t'en ts'ai*, lest at some dangerous rapid or whirlpool the unlucky boat should be "submerged" or "engulfed."

The Chinese "landsman," who first takes a boat journey, is careful to enquire what are "the words to be avoided" on board, lest having unconsciously transgressed, he find all the crew on strike and himself obliged to pay a "meat dinner" to all on board before they can be persuaded to continue their journey!

CHAIR COOLIES' SUPERSTITIONS.

A chair-bearer or other coolie is very careful, when about to start on a journey, not to use the words "tiger," "dragon," "demon," or "snake," for fear that one of these creatures should meet him on the road.

Chair coolies regard the cross pole on the front of a chair as sacred, and no lady is allowed to enter or come out of a chair stepping over this pole. Anyone doing so is liable to a hearty cursing from the chair-bearer, as he supposes that boils will grow on his shoulders in consequence of her disregard of this rule. The same rule applies to the carrying-pole of the coolie. Coolies are always careful to rest their poles against a wall when not carrying anything, lest anyone should step over them. A chair coolie whilst carrying a chair must not remove the ashes out of his pipe by knocking it against the poles. If he does so the poles are sure to break before the journey's end! Chair coolies have three places where they must not change shoulders when carrying a

chair: (1) in front of a temple, lest they show disrespect to the idols; (2) on a bridge, for fear of offending the Bridge Guardian; (3) in front of a chair shop, lest someone should take his job from him! Chair coolies object to carrying *old* straw sandals on the back of a chair; they throw such sandals out of reach of "Sandal Collectors," (who use old sandals as fuel), lest they get blisters on their feet. Coolies are very superstitious about getting their heads wet by rain when on a journey, because they believe that each drop of rain produces a creature, the name of which rhymes with "house"!

No chair-bearer or other coolie must dress *standing* on the bed, but must descend to the floor before doing so. This is said to be one of the greatest offences a coolie can commit, and is punished by the whole party refusing to proceed on their journey that day, and the whole of the men's expenses being charged to the transgressor. The reason given is that a man thus standing on the bed "exalts himself above his fellows," and betokens that robbers or some evil characters who "oppress" their fellows, are lurking on the way.

MINERS' SUPERSTITIONS.

Lucky and unlucky days are much observed by miners, as dire calamity is sure to follow the commencement of operations on an unlucky day. Words with unlucky sounds are also carefully avoided. The words *ching*, *kuang*, *tao*, and *tah* must on no consideration be used. The word *ching* is said to be too suggestive of "beggary," "loneliness," etc., etc.; and the word *tao* of "stumbling" or "falling," and that of *tah* to the collapse of the roof of the pit, etc., etc. The fine imposed upon any workman who uses these words is, that the whole set of

miners in that particular mine take a holiday on the day the unlucky word is used ; and their food be paid for by the man who used the word.

TRADESMEN'S SUPERSTITIONS.

The selection of a lucky day, and the worship of the "god of riches" are considered as absolutely indispensable when opening a new shop, or commencing business after the New Year or other public holiday. Dyer Ball, in his book, "Things Chinese," tells of a curious custom in Canton, as follows : "When at daylight the shutters are taken down, the shopman ensures good luck for the day by shaking the balls of the abacus (Frontispiece, Fig. 1), at first slowly, but gradually increasing in speed until a continuous clicking sound is produced." I have not heard of such a custom in Si-chuen, but a similar object is gained by "washing the abacus" every morning before business. This is done by picking it up from the counter, giving it a vigorous shake, and then wiping it with a duster or brushing it with a feather brush to dislodge any demons who may have lodged there during the night !

Shopkeepers are very careful that no quarrelling, cursing, or fighting take place between the 15th of the last and the 15th of the first month, lest bad luck follow in the ensuing year, and end in ruin and bankruptcy.

Apprentices, when removing the shutters in the morning, must not talk to each other, or shout to fellow apprentices across the street, lest any demons, who have been lurking on the street during the night, should be attracted by their voices and enter the shop.

Such words as "fire," "death," "demons," or any other unlucky word, must be carefully avoided in the early morning, or at the opening of a new shop.

Great solicitation is felt by the shopman when he opens afresh at the New Year, that the first customer be a person of some standing or belonging to the "lucky class"; as the luck of the ensuing year is supposed to depend on the first person who enters his shop.

SUPERSTITIONS OF THE LITERATI AND OFFICIALS.

In most civilized countries superstitions are largely confined to the more ignorant classes of the people, and are not found among the educated, but in China the literati and gentry seem quite as superstitious as the common people; in fact, they are the leaders in many of the common superstitions, such as the "feng-shui" (geomancy) and reverence for written characters.

Every district city has one or more pagodas built by subscriptions from the gentry, to control the literary influences of the district. No mining operations may take place in certain districts for fear of disturbing the literary influences so precious to the superstitious gentry and scholars. In some cities no flour mills are allowed for the same reason.

In a certain city in West China, in the year 1888, a fine white pagoda, which had only been built a few years previous, was being pulled down because the literary influence of the surrounding district had been disturbed by the Dragon, who was feeling uncomfortable by the excessive weight upon his body; the result being that no M.A. degrees had been obtained for several years. When the pagoda had been reduced to one half its height the M.A. degree was obtained by a scholar of the city, who received the congratulations of the rejoicing literati.

Disrespect shown to written characters, or the wilful

misuse of printed or written paper, is a great crime in the eyes of the literati. Societies are, therefore, formed for the collection of such paper; and Paper "Treasures" are built in every city, where such paper is carefully burned by the agents of the societies who collect it. These societies distribute bamboo baskets (Frontispiece, Fig. 2) to shop-keepers, schools, etc., and all written paper is carefully put therein. Iron tongs (Frontispiece, Fig. 2A) are used by the paper collector to remove advertisements, bills, etc., from walls or posting stations, etc. My first teacher, a Confucianist, used to tell of cases, known to himself, of men who had gone blind, and others who had come to want, through neglect to reverence written characters. In my innocence I ventured to ask what would happen to rats who dared to gnaw the Sacred Books? His prompt reply was. "They will lose their teeth." This same teacher also informed me that the essays of the scholars who entered for the Triennial Exams. were burned in a "clean place," and the ashes sent by the officials to the manager of the provincial mint, who used these ashes to form moulds for the brass coins in common use. "That is the reason," said he, "that the characters on the coins are so distinct"!

The literary class are not noted for being over religious, but when they are about to enter the examination halls they are in great fear of demons, and they often give alms, burn incense, distribute moral literature, pick up bits of written paper, etc., etc., in order to get merit and counteract the influence of these demons who are seeking to destroy their chances of success. When a district is fortunate enough to produce a Poet Laureate, the wife of this man is requested by the people of the district to visit all the city gates, and scatter before each a handful

of rice, that the whole population may share in the good luck of her household.

The literati are often very superstitious in regard to the characters which form their names. If their luck is bad and no degrees are obtained, a fortune-teller is consulted, who informs the enquirer that too much of one of the "five elements" enters into his name. A man, for instance, whose name is made up of the "metal" radical and a phonetic, has too much of the "metal" element, which is weighing him down, and he is advised to change it to one with the "water" or "earth" radical, and thus bring about a balance of the elements, and a return of good luck. I know one official in this province whose luck was thus impaired by too much metal, and who was advised by a fortune-teller to change the character to one with *three* metal radicals, and thus by adding "metal upon metal," counteract the bad influences which were against him !





To face page 15.

Objects connected with Superstition.

1. Horse Shoe Charm. 2. Caterpillar Maiden. 3. Hill Guard. 4. Eight Diagram Board. 5. Soul Binder. 6, 6A. Hundred Name Locks. 7, 7A, 7B. "Finger Posts" and General's Arrow. 8. Spirit Ladder. 9. "Dread Day" Tablet.

PART II.—SUPERSTITIONS COMMON TO ALL CLASSES.

I.—OLD WIVES' SUPERSTITIONS.

A number of superstitions which do not readily fall to any other group, I have placed under the head of "Old Wives' Superstitions." Not that these superstitions are confined to "old wives," but I use the term to classify a number of the more silly superstitions common among all classes.

THROWING THE SPIRIT PLUM.

In some parts of Si-chuen a curious superstition prevails as follows: On the 5th of the 5th moon, crowds of men, women and children repair to some high place near the city they live in, and bands of young men, more or less under the influence of drink, collect on these high places and throw unripe plums at the crowds assembled below. Any man who secures a plum is sure of good luck and prosperity for the ensuing year; any woman, desirous of obtaining a son, eating one of these plums will surely realise her desire. The origin of this custom is wrapt in mystery.

THE LUMINOUS FUR SPIRIT CAT CHARM.

This charm is a picture, printed on yellow paper, of a large cat with a rat in its mouth and one under its

paw. Cats are not allowed to roam at their will in China, but are tied to the leg of a table or a block of wood to prevent them from straying. Rats are often seen running across a room where the cat is thus made fast, of course, knowing that "puss" is tied. If the natural cat cannot rid the house of rats, then "spirit" cats, whose fur is supposed to emit a luminous light, are used instead. These charm cats, to be efficacious, must be pasted in the kitchen, on the left hand side of the kitchen god, sometime during the early hours of the morning. The light emitted from the cat's brown fur is supposed to frighten away all the rats.

CAWING OF THE CROW.

The Chinese are much alarmed if crows, in their flight, set up a wa-wa-wa sound, as it is believed to indicate death to someone in the house they fly over.

DOG OR COCK ON THE ROOF.

If a dog or a cock is seen on the roof of a house they are hastily driven down, as this is a sure sign of fire in the house below.

HOW TO STOP A FIRE.

A man should climb to the roof of the house, smash six eggs, and throw a handful of rice into the flames. When ordinary means fail to stop the progress of a fire, it is the duty of the mandarin to sacrifice himself for the good of the people by flinging himself into the flames to appease the appetite of the fire god. The wily Celestial, to save his skin, does this by proxy; he throws in his dress, his hat, and his boots.

DOGS HOWLING AT NIGHT.

If dogs set up a low whine or howl at night, they are supposed to have seen demons enter the house, and a death is sure to follow.

A SNAKE IN THE HOUSE.

A snake found hiding in a house causes great alarm to the inmates, who believe it to be one of their ancestors returned in that shape because of the neglect of their descendants to supply their wants in Hades. The unlucky visitor is worshipped, and sent forth with incense or paper money, or in some cases it is fed and cared for till it "moves off" on its own accord.

A SPARROW'S NEST IN A SKY LAMP.

If a sparrow makes its nest in the box of the *T'ien-teng*, or sky lamp (light to guide wandering spirits home), the people say that a fire will take place in that vicinity, and a Taoist priest is called in to return thanks to the planet Mars, who presides over the "fire element."

LUCKY DAYS.

Lucky days are carefully calculated and recorded in the Imperial Almanac, and are rigidly observed by all who wish prosperity in any calling in life. A boy cannot go to school till the lucky day comes round; the master announces a series of lucky days, upon any of which the scholars may enter school; the business man, the boatman, the coolie, the student, in fact, all sorts and conditions of men are bound by this superstition. There are certain days which are very lucky, others that are a little less so. The same applies to unlucky days, but there are twelve days in the year which everyone must

avoid; these are called the days that Yangkong of the Ming dynasty avoided, and are as follows: 13th of the 1st month; 11th of the 2nd; 9th of the 3rd; 7th of the 4th; 5th of the 5th; 3rd of the 6th; 1st of the 7th; 29th of the 7th; 27th of the 8th; 25th of the 9th; 23rd of the 10th; 21st of the 11th; and 19th of the 12th, respectively. No one will contract a marriage, bury the dead, move into a new house, take a long journey or do anything of importance on these days.

THE COMET CHARM.

If a son is reckless and disobedient, the parents sometimes consult the fortune-teller, who informs them that their son has "met with a comet," which has upset his mind. The parents are then recommended to buy two bamboo brushes (Frontispiece, Fig. 3), used to clean out the Chinese cooking pot, and hang them up, one on either side of the door, and this will counteract the influence of the comet. The idea for selecting the bamboo brush is because it is somewhat of a comet-shape; and the numberless strips of bamboo are like the numberless tricks and pranks a profligate son indulges in.

THE HORSESHOE CHARM.

The horseshoe charm (Photo, facing page 15, Fig. 1) made from an old horseshoe, is used by very small children who have transgressed against the "night-horse star." This charm is worn to prevent any evil influences which may be lurking around when the child goes abroad, from harming the child. After five or six years of age this charm is discarded as the child is then supposed to be proof against such evil influences. Rich people use silver instead of iron, and an abacus, or pair of scissors,

is engraved upon the ring to indicate that the child, if a boy, will be good at arithmetic, or if a girl, clever at needlework.

NINE-HEADED MONSTER.

Soon after arriving in Kia-ting, in Si-chuen, I was suddenly awakened one night by a deafening banging of doors and window panels; thinking that a fire had broken out, I ran outside to enquire where it was, but was informed that it was the "nine-headed monster" flying over, that had caused the commotion! The common belief is that this creature, in the shape of a large bird, has nine heads, and drops down blood as it flies over, which causes the death of someone on whose house it drops. The banging of the panels and doors is to hurry it on its way. One moonlight night I discovered that this dreaded monster was a flock of wild geese flying overhead at a great height; but I failed to convince the Chinese that what they so much dreaded was nothing more dreadful than a flock of harmless wild geese.

FIRING AT THE PHŒNIX MOUND.

The Chinese have many superstitious notions in regard to producing rain, such as striking great bells, or tablets, etc. The method in Si-chuen for producing a plentiful supply of rain is very curious, but simple. Some six or seven English miles outside the north gate of the capital (Chentu), there is a low range of hills called the "Phœnix Hill." On a day fixed, soon after the harvest moon, by the Governor-General, who has previously consulted a geomancer on the subject, the high provincial officials, both civil and military, repair to this spot to witness of

take part in the ceremony of "Shooting the Phoenix Hill." The City Guard, led by the Commander-in-Chief, proceed to this spot, and fire volleys at this hill. Cannon are also used on special occasions when drought is severe. The origin of this superstition is as follows:—

At the end of the Ming dynasty (1644) the famous rebel leader Chang, of Manifest Loyalty, who devastated the province of Si-chuen, was killed at a place called Hsi Chong by the Manchu general, and his body, or what remained of it after the punishment of "slicing to pieces" had been carried out, was buried at the foot of this hill. The joy of the people at the death of this tyrant was so great that, at the anniversary of his death, they fired crackers and guns over his grave. In the course of years this firing of guns, which probably produced rain, was turned into a ceremony for producing rain for the ensuing year. The original object of the firing has been forgotten in the lapse of years, but the ceremony is religiously performed every year with favourable results. The general who put Chang to death erected a stone tablet over his grave with the following inscription:—

"His death took place at Hsi Chong town;
His corpse was layed in Phoenix Mound.
Each year as harvest moon comes round,
The peal of joyful guns resound."

HAUNTED HOUSES.

The Chinese are firm believers in ghosts; and haunted houses, with their blood-curdling stories, are staple conversation in the tea shops. The stories are told with great zest by the gossips who frequent these places. If a person has been killed, or died under suspicious circumstances, their ghosts are seen reflected on the

walls or tiles of the house on a moonlight night, and no one will stay in such a house for that night. Sorcerers are called in to "cleanse the house," if the people cannot move elsewhere. But if they are able to move, no family will stay in a "haunted house"; thus a desirable house is often sold cheaply, because no one will rent it.

TRAVELLERS MEETING WITH DEMONS ON THE ROAD.

The Chinese are very loth to travel after dark, not only because the roads are dangerous, but because of the greater danger of meeting with demons who have got loose from the "infernal regions," and are seeking to catch someone to send back as their substitute.

SKY LAMPS.

Sky lamps (Frontispiece, Fig. 4)—lamps placed on the top of poles, anything from twenty to sixty feet in height—are seen in cities, towns, villages, and even along the road at certain intervals. They are not intended to give light to benighted pedestrians, but to guide "wandering souls" to their respective homes; and also to counteract the "baneful influences" of a malignant district. The people of Kia-ting and surrounding districts have a saying that "The Sky lamps make pilgrimages to Mount Omei." The origin of this belief is the floating lights seen from the summit of Mount Omei. These lights, will-o'-the-wisp like, look very much like sky lamps, and a superstitious people very naturally fix on such things to give credit to their beliefs.

TWITCHING OF THE EYELIDS.

The twitching of the eyelid is considered very unlucky and betokens calamity, in some form or other, to the

person who suffers from it. Anyone interested in the subject might easily collect on the streets a dozen small pieces of red paper with a charm written on them to counteract the calamity. The charm varies in different localities, but the following is a fair sample :—

“ If the twitching eye your lot befall,
Write a charm upon the eastern wall ;
As the sun his upward way pursues,
Will change the evil into bliss for you.”

The “ twitching ” of the left eye betokens the loss of money ; the “ twitching ” of the right, a fall over a precipice, or the receiving of a beating : a play being made on the word *ngai*, “ a precipice,” and a word of the same sound which means “ to receive a beating.”

MARRIAGE OF THE CATERPILLAR MAIDEN.

After the season known as “ Arouse from hibernation,” about March the 5th, snakes, caterpillars, and other noxious creatures, become a pest in many places. The Chinese, to counteract this nuisance, have a charm in universal use called “ The marriage of the caterpillar maiden ” (Photo, facing page 15, Fig. 2), which they paste up in their houses on the Birthday of Buddah, the 8th of the 4th moon. The wording of this charm varies according to the genius of the writer. Some say, that the caterpillar is a “ Kiangsi man,” others that it is a foreigner.

The following is a good specimen :—

“ The Caterpillar Maiden’s wed
Is on Budda’s natal day.
May they go far among the hills
And there forever stay.”

CHILD PASSING THE “ NIGHT CRY ” PASS.

One of the thirty-seven passes or periods through which a child may have to pass is called the “ night cry pass.”

A charm in common use, and which may be seen on every highway, written on small pieces of red paper, pasted on gateways and pillars, runs as follows:—

“Heaven is yellow, earth is green,
No rest is given from constant screams,
These lines, good sir! be pleased to read;
Our child, get rest; our thanks: god speed.”

The person whose child gives him no sleep gets this charm written out, and then with candles, paper, and incense, he goes to the nearest highway to await the arrival of some traveller, whom he beseeches to give the child another name, worship the local deity, and read the charm. This done, the traveller proceeds on his way with the distracted parent's “god speed,” and the satisfaction that he has done a “good deed.”

CLOSING OF CITY GATES.

One of the most silly of the Chinese superstitions which the newcomer observes, is the closing of the city gates by order of the officials, in times of drought or floods. If there is too much heat, the “South” gate, which presides over the “fire element,” is closed; if too much rain, the “North” gate, which presides over the “water element,” is closed. Butchers are forbidden by the officials to kill animals; dragons are carried in procession by half naked men, and the inhabitants throw pailfuls of water over the dragon as a hint that they would like a supply of the cooling rain which he is supposed to preside over.

II.—SUPERSTITIONS IN CONNECTION WITH SICKNESS AND DISEASE.

This part of the paper is divided into two parts, viz. :—

1st. A description of the methods used to ward off disease and sickness ; and

2nd. Methods used to get rid of diseases already contracted.

1st. Superstitious methods used to ward off sickness and disease :—

THE ANGRY ANCESTOR CHARM.

All pain and even the smallest misfortunes are attributed to malign forces. It is a common sight among all classes of people to see one of the women of the household engaged in the following mummary with a basin of water and three chopsticks : The handles of the chopsticks are dipped in water and then reversed, the points standing in the water and the handles held between the finger and thumb. Then the person rapidly runs over a list of names of all who have died in connection with the family, pausing for a moment at each name to loosen the grip on the chopsticks. Sometimes the chopsticks stand up, and this is supposed to be evidence that the dead person whose name happened to be mentioned at the moment, is angry with the family, and causes some member of it to feel pain somewhere in the body.

TAOIST POPE CHARM.

In a book on sorcery there are specimens of over one hundred different kinds of charms; every sorcerer seems to have his own; but amongst this variety there are special favourites, such as the "House Guard" charm, a special kind of which is the "Taoist Pope" charm. This charm, of which there are several forms, usually represents the Pope as riding on a tiger's back with a sword in one hand and a fan in the other. All around are figures of caterpillars, snakes, insects, flies, etc. When this charm is used for the 5th moon feast the words:—

"At noon on the fifth of the fifth,
The Pope astride of his Tiger;
His mouth being all red and clear sky overhead,
To 'the land of the Shades,' all demons have fled,"

are written on either side of the charm.

This charm is purchased by every family, and together with mugwort placed on the feast day above mentioned in some conspicuous position in the house or shop. A seal, supposed to be the Taoist's Pope's, is attached to these charms, which gives them an additional value.

THE HILL GUARD.

In connection with "feng-shui," or geomancy, localities are distinguished as "good," or "auspicious," "evil," or "malignant." If a house faces one of these "malignant" localities a Hill Guard (Photo, facing page 15, Fig. 3) is put over the door to counteract the unlucky "malignant influences." The Hill Guard is usually a board about a foot-and-a-half long, by a foot wide, with the sun painted in red, rising from behind the hills. This Hill Guard is said to have originated with Chian-t'ai Kong, a

famous general of the Cheo dynasty, who is now known as the "father of the gods," because he deified so many of those now worshipped by the Chinese.

THE "ONE GOOD" MIRROR.

It is a common sight in most cities to see a small mirror hung over a door; or the words "One Good" (Frontispiece, Fig. 5) written on a board. The belief is that the demons, who would enter the house, looking into the mirror, are frightened at their own faces; or, knowing, as is commonly said:—"One good deed will cancel a thousand evil deeds," they are afraid to enter a house the inmates of which are supposed to be fond of doing good. These mirrors are usually placed where the sharp angles of a house point directly toward a doorway, in the hope that the demons in their flight may strike these angles and be driven into the house opposite! Sometimes the mirror has the words "One Good" written across the glass; but the plain mirror has the same effect upon the demons.

THE EEL TRAP.

Demons "fly in a straight line," therefore walls are built crookedly to intercept them; they may also be trapped like eels, so it is a common practice to hang an ordinary eel trap (Frontispiece, Fig. 6) over the doorway of a house supposed to be visited by demons. These traps, made of bamboo, are of various lengths and sizes; but that used for demon trapping is about a foot-and-a-half long by six inches in diameter. They are conical in shape and so plaited that an eel, or demon, having once entered is unable to come out again. The trap is hung up, by a piece of string, immediately opposite

the front door, and the demon in his search for the door accidentally enters the mouth of it and finds himself a prisoner !

MOUNT T'AI STONE PILLARS.

These stone pillars (Frontispiece, Fig. 7) are placed on the sides of rivers where the water is liable to burst the banks ; facing dangerous rapids ; at cross roads ; and facing the entrance to public or private dwellings. The stones are usually about 4 ft. high, 1 ft. wide, and about 6 in. thick. They are surmounted with the head of a "monster" of varying shape and expression, according to the genius of the workman, or designer. Below the head of the "monster," engraved on the stone, are the words, "This is Kan-tang of T'ai Shan"! No demon will face such a monster who guards the way to any dwelling or cross road. The origin of the superstition is as follows : On the highest peak of mount T'ai (one of the five sacred mountains of China, in the province of Shan-tong), there is a god "who decapitates demons," whose name is "Kan-tang." In course of time, the image of this god was carved on wood or engraved in stone and called the "Mount T'ai Stone Pillar" and is now used to destroy or oppose demons. The "Swallowing Monster" is another form used over doorways, etc.

THE SEVEN KILL TABLET.

In the yard of the district magistrate of Chentu, there is said to be a stone erected by the famous rebel Chang-Hsien-Chong, or Chang, of Manifest Loyalty, who exterminated the Chinese population of Si-chuen at the close of the Ming dynasty (1644). The inscription on this stone, which is Chang's plea for extermination,

runs as follows: "Heaven produced all things for the use of man, man has used all these things without requiting Heaven; kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill." I have made several attempts to see this stone, but the officials and others whom I approached on the subject, all assured me that if anyone set eyes on it, murders would take place in the city or rebellions in the province. Not being desirous to bring such calamities on this already over-burdened people, I have not pressed to see this wonderful stone. The officials have built a wall around it to prevent anyone from looking at it. I was also informed that the stone lies on its face, with the inscription downwards.

PARTITION WALLS.

Every Government office, public building, or temple, has a high wall built across the entrance, some distance from the door, for the purpose of preventing evil spirits from entering these places. Many private houses, if they face an open space, or are overlooked by some unlucky building, also have these walls. These walls are often built in a zig-zag manner to prevent demons, "who are said to go in a straight line," from getting into the house. The walls in front of a Government building have a "monster," somewhat after the shape of a lion, called a "coveter," painted in gaudy colours to remind the official that he must not covet. The animal is represented as trying to grasp at the sun, whilst trampling the "eight treasures" under his feet, as being beneath his notice.

THE EIGHT DIAGRAMS.

"Can the Book of Changes go to your country?" is a question often asked by scholars and others. The common

belief is that foreigners cannot master this mysterious book, and that if they could they would forget its contents before crossing the sea. The diagrams which it contains were originally eight in number, and are referred to Fu Hsi (B.C. 2800), but they have now increased to sixty-four, and form the stock-in-trade of the geomancer, fortune-teller, and others of like cult. A small octagonal board (Photo, facing page 15, Fig. 4), with these eight diagrams painted in a circle, with the "Great Limit" symbol in the centre, is regarded as efficacious in cases of "malignant influences" causing bad luck to a household. It is usually hung over the entrance to the house.

THE SWALLOWING MONSTER.

A favourite method of preventing demons from entering a dwelling house is to paint a "swallowing monster's" head on the back of a water ladle, or on a soft block of wood. The monster is the same as the one used for the T'ai Shan Pillar stones. The faces of these monsters are painted in red, green and blue, and they usually have a wooden sword in the mouth to frighten the demons who would enter the house to cause sickness and disease. These monsters may be seen in large numbers in every city, town and village, and not infrequently on single dwellings on the main roads.

DOOR GODS.

Door gods are used by all classes of society. Those in general use are made of paper. There are in reality only two door gods, but these are represented in a variety of forms according to the taste or ability of the artist. A distinction, too, is sometimes made of "civil" and "military." These door gods are pasted on the

door some few days before the New Year. In families who are in mourning the four words, *shen-tú ü lui*, the names of the original door gods, take the place of the figures usually pasted. These door gods are often painted in life-size on the doors of public buildings, temples, or mansions of the rich. The origin of this superstition is as follows: The founder of the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-907) had two famous generals who helped to gain the empire for the new house. The name of the one was Ch'ing Ch'ün, and the other Hu-Ching-Teh; after the death of these two generals the Emperor became seriously ill, and these two generals appeared to him and caused him to get better. As a reward the Emperor deified them as door gods for his palace, to prevent evil spirits from entering. In course of time these two became the door gods of the common people, and are now almost universally used by all classes. Occasionally the sentence: "Only seek to keep your conscience void of offence, then what need of having door gods?" may be seen in the place of door gods, showing that some do not think it necessary to trouble these generals to keep away evil spirits. But these are rare exceptions, the general belief is that they are indispensable to the peace of the household.

THE TIGER PILLOW.

Chinese children have few toys, and those they have are more or less connected with superstition or idolatry. Toward the New Year vendors of stuffed tigers, of various sizes and colours (Frontispiece, Fig. 8), may be seen on the streets. The smaller models are used exclusively as toys, but the larger ones as pillows. If a child is given to talking in its sleep, has dreams, or

wakes up with a start, some evil spirit is supposed to be the cause of the disturbance, and a stuffed tiger of the larger size is purchased and the child uses it as a pillow ! The evil spirits are supposed to be afraid of the "king of beasts," as the tiger is regarded by the Chinese.

ASCENDING THE HEIGHTS.

On the sixteenth day of the first month great crowds of people—men, women and children—may be seen on the city wall or any elevated spot within a few *li* of a city. The common belief is that if they ascend the heights on this day, they will have less sickness and disease in the ensuing year. In the capital this custom is known as the "Hundred Disease Stroll." Parties of young fellows, with drums and gongs, march up and down the city wall for the purpose of ridding themselves of the "hundred kinds of disease" that may be encountered during the coming year.

ADOPTION.

Dyer Ball, in his "Things Chinese," divides adoption into two classes ; first, what he calls "true" adoption ; and secondly, "spurious." Speaking of the latter, he says : "The custom has its foundation in the superstition that it is possible to cheat malignant spirits to whose evil machinations are due the death or illness of the children. If the parents are afraid that they will not be able to bring up the child, or that falling short of that, disease may attack it, they hit upon the expedient—sometimes suggested by the fortune-teller—of this demi-adoption. Presents are made by the parents to the so-called adopter, and return presents are received. The adopting parents take a casual interest in his or her adopted child, presents and visits being made by both parties on

the respective birthday of the primary interested parents and at feast days, etc., etc. The child still remains in its natural parents' house, and in the event of its parents dying, the so-called god-parent is not bound to take the child, even if left destitute. . . . It is supposed that the spirits will be deceived into the belief that the child has really been adopted into the new family, and the disease, death, disaster, or ill-luck that would otherwise ensue, are effectually prevented. . . . There are other kinds of superstitions in connection with adoption, such as giving a child in adoption to a banyan tree, a bridge, an idol or stone lions in front of a temple. In all these cases it is believed that the spirits inhabiting these several objects will take the child under their protection and ensure its immunity from all the ills that flesh is heir to. On a small piece of paper is written the account of adoption, and then follows the word 'male' or 'female' and the surname of the child. This is pasted on the object selected, and three sticks of incense, joss paper, wine, pork, chicken and cooked rice are offered. . . . The piece of paper once put up is not renewed as the spirit is supposed to be sufficiently informed by one notice. The mother of the child, or sometimes a 'praying mother,' is called, who performs the ceremony, offering up a prayer, informing the spirit that the child is placed under its protection. In the case of a god being selected, part of the name—that is, one of the characters forming his title or designation—is combined with that of the child, forming a new name for the child, which, however, is only used by the parents."

MOVING HOUSE.

Moving house in China is no easy matter, not so much from the amount of furniture, goods, etc., to be removed,

as the fear of evil spirits causing calamity. A lucky day having been ascertained from the almanac or the fortune-teller, someone must first enter the house saying "Let there be good luck"; after this furniture, etc., may be moved in. Great caution must be taken that nothing is carried *out* of the house but only brought in. The moving of the kitchen range is a very delicate matter, as the kitchen god is one of the most important of the gods worshipped by the Chinese. Great care is taken that the fire does not go out, as this betokens calamity to the family. Sawdust or branches of cedar are ignited in the stove when about to be moved from the old house to the new. The night before moving, incense and candles must be placed in the central hall; no person who enters the house must go empty-handed, but carry either cash, rice, incense or cloth. The senior male member of the family carrying a vessel containing a little of each of the five grains first enters the house, then the "mother" of the household, holding a mirror in front of her, followed by the "father," with the family gods in his hands. The ancestral tablet, with the accompanying bell, incense jar, etc., all follow in their proper order. Having reached the central hall the "Head of the House" receives the incense jar and places it on the family altar. After doing this he bows profoundly, saying: "Let there be extraordinary good luck," and recites a few verses blessing the gods as follows:

"Peace at home and goodly treasure,
Festive joys increase our pleasure.
Ten thousandfold from fertile field,
Happiness, long life, their blessing yield.
Descendants in abundance rise,
Men of talent carry off the prize.
All things prosper to our liking,
Good luck, great good, our pathway striking."

This ceremony is called "Fixing up the Gods," which is usually followed by "Thanking the Earth," and the pasting up of the "House Guard" charm. After this, things may go on in their ordinary way, and the family feel quite at rest as to the future.

2nd. Superstitious methods used to get rid of disease and sickness :—

THE THIRTEEN GREAT GUARDIANS.

If a woman becomes very sick, and no medicine has any effect, recourse is had to the "Thirteen Great Guardian" plan for the recovery. This plan is to select thirteen devout widows who present a petition to the gods on behalf of the sick person, and undertake to be her "guardians" for the future. The petition states the province, city, parish, ward, and street, where the person dwells, also her name and nature of the sickness; it then goes on to say that doubtless the cause of the sickness is her failure to "do good," and the evil of her ways, but promises that if she recovers she will "turn over a new leaf" in the future. This petition is burned before the family gods or in a temple with incense and candles, and the "guardian widows" return to their respective homes.

BINDING THE MIGRATING SOUL.

Old men, with a circular bell in one hand, and a staff, with stripes of red cloth, incense, and an idol bound to it (Photo, facing page 15, Fig. 5), in the other, parade the streets in most large cities. They are called "Soul Binders" or "Llama Soul Binders," from the belief that Llamas are specially clever at this work. If a person,

specially, a child, becomes sick, these men are called in to charm back the soul. A "charmed" egg is wrapped in oil paper, and then cooked by lighting the paper wrapped round it. The sick person usually eats this egg. After going through a certain formula the Soul Binder declares that the soul has returned, and then proceeds to tie red cord round the neck, wrists, and ankles of the sick person to prevent the soul from migrating a second time. A similar form, called "Burning the Egg," is practised by old women. The egg is first "charmed" by the Egg Burner, then wrapped in oil paper or placed in hot ashes to be cooked. In this case the egg is burned till the shell cracks, and the yolk is scattered among the ashes, or on the ground. The Egg Burner then looks at the color and shape of the yolk and "divines" from these whether the soul has "migrated" into the body of another human being or some animal. In some cases the position of the egg-shell only is observed. If it bursts towards the east the Egg Burner turns to that quarter and calls: "Three souls, seven spirits, come back quickly." If it bursts towards the west or south, she turns in that direction, and uses the same call. In this case no binding process is gone through, but simply the calling back of the soul performed.

In the case of measles or small-pox, hemp is used.

CALLING THE SPIRIT'S NAME.

If a person becomes sick, and some evil spirit is supposed to be the cause, but the particular evil spirit is not known, a plan called the "Erecting of a Cash" is adopted to find out who among the many evil spirits is responsible. Some one of the household selects a large brass coin, which he endeavours to make stand

upright on a smooth stone, at the same time calling over the names of a number of evil spirits ; when the name of the evil spirit who has caused the sickness is mentioned the cash will stand upright. The particular spirit being ascertained, candles, incense and paper are offered, and boiled rice is scattered in all directions to feed the offended spirit who is supposed to be hovering round.

EGG AND SEED CHARM.

The death of a young boy is a cause of great sorrow to the parents. When the evil spirit is released, it is supposed to enter the body of the next child that is born. In order to prevent its return, the parents will often mutilate the little dead body, and bury it at the cross-roads near by. I saw in the home of a missionary a young girl, whose father had mutilated two children in this way. Another plan to prevent the second coming of the evil spirit is to tie an egg and some mustard seed to the body of the dead child, in the belief that the evil spirit will not appear until the egg hatches and the seed sprouts. The astute and anxious parents carefully boil the egg and the seed in order to postpone the date indefinitely.

AGUE CHARM.

Ague is very common amongst the Chinese, and is supposed to be caused by evil spirits taking possession of the body of the person affected. A common cure is to cut from a proclamation the impression of the Governor-General's seal, place it in a piece of paper with a few copper coins belonging to the reign of Chien Long, (A.D. 1736-1796), called "Golden Dog Cash," or "Birthday Cash." A few grains of red pepper, and a small

quantity of white rice are added, and then the paper is carefully folded and placed in the pocket of the one afflicted. When he goes for a walk on the street this pocket is slyly dropped on the road, and the person who picks it up becomes affected with the disease, and the other is relieved!

A few cash only, forms a sure bait if dropped on the street in the same way.

SORCERERS EXORCISING DEMONS.

"Si-chuen is an evil spirit region,

Where truth lies dead, and falsehood rules the reason."

—*Proverb.*

Si-chuen being an "evil spirit region," the Sorcerer's trade is a very lucrative one, and their shops are in almost every other street in large cities. If any one is very sick, and medicines have no effect, a sorcerer is called in to exorcise the demons who are causing the trouble. They usually commence at dusk, and continue till midnight or early morning. Their cries and horn blowing are most hideous; no one in the neighbourhood being able to sleep as long as the noise continues. Part of the ceremony is to locate and capture by means of rings (Frontispiece, Fig. 9), the demons, and seal them in small jars (Frontispiece, Fig. 10). These jars are taken home by the sorcerer and placed in rows before the gods of his cult, where the public can see them from the street!

AVOID MEN!

If a person is sick and no medicine seems to touch the disease, a sorcerer is called in who declares that the cause of sickness is because the person has not avoided certain unlucky days. A common saying is that "men

fear the third, sixth, and ninth days ; and that women fear the first, fourth, and seventh."

On the day declared by the sorcerer to be unlucky, the two words "Avoid Men" are written on a large red envelope and stuck up in front of the door to warn people from entering. It is said that those who are deeply in debt frequently put up this notice when they fear the creditor will be making a call !

CALLING BACK THE SOUL.

The belief is very common amongst the Chinese, that the soul of a person may leave the body and "get lost." Almost any day, in a large city, women may be heard "calling back the soul" of some child which is sick. A common plan is to light three pieces of incense, take an egg in the hand, stand with one foot on the door-sill and cry: "Three souls, seven spirits, come back, quickly." This is repeated, with additional phrases such as: "If you have fallen in the water ;" "If you have received a fright ;" "If you have fallen into a ditch, three souls, seven spirits, come back, quickly." A more effective plan is to eat a "charmed" egg, carry a cock to the City God Temple and enquire at each of the "ten departments" of Hades if the soul is there, with the request that it may be allowed to return home. Another curious superstition prevails in Chentu as follows: If a mother and her babe are invited to a friend's house, the common belief is that if the child sleeps during their stay in the friend's house, one of the souls (the Chinese believe they possess three souls) of the babe may go out of the body and remain in the friend's house, and, of course, the child would sicken and die as a result. To prevent this calamity, three pieces of incense are lighted

and stuck in the roof of the sedan chair when the mother returns to her home. The belief is that the soul will follow the perfume of the incense back to the home of the babe.

THE HUNDRED NAME LOCK.

Children often wear a ring of brass or silver with a clasp or lock attached (Photo, facing page 15, Figs. 6 and 6A), which at first sight might be taken for an ornament, but the real reason for wearing which is because of a superstition attached. If the child is subject to turns of sickness the parents take it to a sorcerer, who divines, by means of a dozen, or more, old swords or knives, what particular "Pass" the child has transgressed. If it is the "Gold Lock Pass," the sorcerer comes to the home and drives out the "Malignant Influences." The parents then ask one hundred persons to subscribe towards a lock, which is put on the child's neck till he or she is twelve years old, when a ceremony called "Crossing the Flower Pass" is performed, and the lock removed.

THE GENERAL'S ARROW.

The traveller in Si-chuen must have noticed, at cross roads and other points, a number of stone slabs about the height of an English mile stone. If he should enquire the object of these stones, he will be told that they are "Finger Posts"; but if he presses the question, and asks why so many are required at one point, he will discover that many of these finger posts serve a double purpose. The first is to direct passengers the way they should go, but a second is to guard against the "General's Arrow." These stones have, in addition to the words "Finger Post," the words "General's Arrow," with a bow and arrow near the first characters

(Photo, facing page 15, Figs. 7, 7A and 7B). Sorcerers, and others, have concocted seventy-two "Baneful Influences" which may assail a child, and thirty-seven "Passes" through which they are liable to pass. If a child becomes sick, the mother at once supposes that the child has met one of the "Baneful Influences" called *Sha*, or "trespassed" on one of the "Passes." If the fortune-teller confirms her fears, he will also tell her a remedy. A book, which has no name, being prohibited by law, but which we may call the Sorcerer's Guide, devotes twelve and a half pages to this subject. It does not give the names of the seventy-two "Baneful Influences," but carefully records the thirty-seven "Passes" as follows:—

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|
| 1. The Five Demon | Pass | 19. The Night Cry | Pass |
| 2. The Heavenly Dog | „ | 20. The Water Fire | „ |
| 3. The Bury Son | „ | 21. The Cock Flying | „ |
| 4. The Scalding Fire | „ | 22. The Fall in Well | „ |
| 5. The Demon Door | „ | 23. The Sun Stroke | „ |
| 6. The Heaven Hanging | „ | 24. The Seven Bowel | „ |
| 7. The Crush Life | „ | 25. The Thunder God | „ |
| 8. The Four Pillar | „ | 26. The Lose Life | „ |
| 9. The Four Seasons | „ | 27. The Priest | „ |
| 10. The General's Arrow | „ | 28. The White Tiger | „ |
| 11. The God of Hades | „ | 29. The Iron Snake | „ |
| 12. The Hundred Day | „ | 30. The Heaven Sweep | „ |
| 13. The Broken Bridge | „ | 31. The Earth Sweep | „ |
| 14. The Golden Lock | „ | 32. The Shooting Cloud | „ |
| 15. The Cut Life Short | „ | 33. The Red Color | „ |
| 16. The Deep Water | „ | 34. The Five Punishments | „ |
| 17. The Bath Tub | „ | 35. The Six Injuries | „ |
| 18. The No Affection | „ | 36. The Heavenly Net | „ |
| 37. The Earthly Snare Pass | | | |

I have already described the ceremony performed when a child "transgresses" on the "Night Cry Pass," so will only briefly describe what takes place when a child has transgressed on the "General's Arrow Pass." The child is taken by its parents to some point where there is a shrine to the local deity, or at the head of a bridge. Wine and vegetables, with incense, candles and paper, are burned at this shrine, and the case clearly reported to the deity, whose aid is solicited. A branch of the peach tree is converted into a bow, and a sprig of willow into an arrow. The parents then wait for the first traveller to come along, who on coming near is bowed to very profusely by the parents with the child in the arms; and protection for the child earnestly besought. After this the traveller takes the bow and arrow and shoots towards the west, and then hangs the bow on the nearest tree. A finger post, either wood or stone, according to the standing of the family, is stuck in the ground by the traveller, who now proceeds on his way after receiving the profound thanks of the child's parents. The words on the stone are:—

"The string will snap with the bend of the bow;
The arrow will stop at the force of the blow."

For a girl the "Great Limit" circle is sometimes used with the general's arrow below, but in this case the arrow points towards the east, whereas that of the boy points towards the west. A common saying is that

"A boy fears the General's arrow,
The girl the King of Hades pass."

A girl being considered of less importance than a boy, no stone, as a rule, is erected for her; but a silver neck charm, with the words "General's arrow" engraved upon it, is constantly worn on the person.

III.—SUPERSTITIONS IN CONNECTION WITH MARRIAGE, BIRTH, DEATH AND BURIAL.

Superstition is so mixed up with all ceremonies in connection with marriage, birth, death and burial, that it is almost impossible to give an account of these without describing the whole of these ceremonies.

I must, however, confine myself to one or two instances in each class, and leave the rest for separate treatment.

MARRIAGE.

The morning when the bride leaves her home, a bushel measure covered with red paper is placed outside the door of her parents' house, and as she is being forced out of her home, for she must not go willingly, she steps into the bushel measure and breaks a hole in the paper ; at the same time someone throws a pair of chopsticks over her shoulder into the door of the house she has left. The meaning of this is not quite clear, but is supposed to be a desire on her part that her parents may have plenty of rice and chopsticks to eat it with after she has gone. When she has been safely placed in her chair, the men bear her away, and one of her relatives carry after the chair a bamboo arrangement called a Telescope (Frontispiece, Fig. 11). This consists of a bamboo plate, about the size of an ordinary dinner

plate, covered with red paper. In the centre of this plate is a small brass mirror, and three arrows covered with red paper are stuck in behind the plate. This mirror is supposed to frighten away any evil spirits who would follow the chair to the new home. When the chair arrives at the bridegroom's house, a table is placed in front of the door with a pint measure, candles, incense and paper. A cock is then killed, and the blood sprinkled around the chair while the "master of ceremonies" recites the following words :—

"A table grand with four square corners,
From Chang-lang's wood and Lu-pan's orders.

The four sides garnished by carver's hand,
The centre adorned with an incense stand.

Ingots of paper like silver all shine,
To offer up to the escort divins.

The chair of the Bride must return alone,
The Bridegroom himself escorts her safe home."

After this the table is removed, the chair is carried into the house, and the telescope which has done its work is carried back to the bride's home or thrown aside as of no further use.

After the marriage a boy carrying a pair of candles, leads the way to the nuptial chamber and performs the ceremony of "sprinkling the bed." This consists of scattering rice, fruit, cakes, etc., on the bed. The boy then recites the following lines :—

"With abundance of gladness, abundance of smiles, our
hands full of fruit which banish their trials."

Also the following :—

"One wave to the east: may sons, grandsons increase, and
in courts of Emperors stand,

"One wave to the south : may sons, grandsons abound, their names among 'wranglers' be found.

"One wave to the west : may sons, grandsons be blest and stand before kings in brilliant dress.

"One wave to the north : may sons, grandsons of worth, as ministers of State from the palace come forth."

After this follows the usual feasting and congratulation.

BIRTH.

The birth of a child, especially of a boy, is a great event in any household, and considerable anxiety is felt lest demons should be lurking about the house and cause trouble. Just before the birth a sorcerer is called in to exorcise all evil influences from the house and insure peace. This is called the "Exorcism of great peace." At this time a midwife is called in. Should the birth be attended with difficulty, recourse is had to crackers, firing of guns, or whatever device can be thought of to scare away the evil spirits. Considerable solicitude is often felt that the first visitor to the house after the birth of the child should be a "lucky" person, as the child's whole future career may be blighted by meeting with an "ill-starred person." No outsider will enter the room where the birth took place for forty days. On the first anniversary of a boy's birth the relatives and friends bring presents of baby clothes, hats, ornaments, playthings, and red eggs. The baby is placed on the floor, and around him are placed various articles such as a book, pencil, chopsticks, money, etc. The first thing he grabs at shows which profession he will follow in his future career.

DEATH.

When a person is at the point of death, a hole is made through the roof, and a bamboo pole placed through the

hole, to allow the *Sha*, or "baneful influences," to escape. A tile or earthenware pot is dashed to pieces on the ground outside that the noise may effect the same purpose. The person, after being washed, is dressed in an odd number of garments: an even number is unlucky and might entail the death of another member of the family. Fur garments are not used lest the wearer should be transformed into an animal in the next life. A short inner shirt is not worn lest the next life should thereby be shortened. Brass buttons or metal of any kind are tabooed, even the button on the cap of a mandarin is made of gilded wood. The fear is lest the weight of the metal should hinder the soul in its upward flight, nay, might even drag it down to the abyss!

A willow wand is placed in the right hand, and a small loaf in the left. These are to keep off the "Spirit Dogs"; if the bread proves ineffectual, the stick may serve the purpose. The *P'eh* or "animal spirits," of which there are seven, having descended to a depth of 10 ft. or 12 ft., return to the surface at the rate of about a foot per day, and always arrive between the 7th or 14th day after the death takes place. The priests foretell the day, and, as one or other of these spirits always returns two hours before the hour at which the person dies, the family know when to prepare for the visit. Food is placed both in the bedroom and in the hall; a jar, containing a few boiled eggs, with a few pairs of chopsticks stuck in besides them, is placed on the table. Fine ashes are sifted over the floors, and a "spirit ladder" (Photo, facing page 15, Fig. 8), consisting of a pole with cash paper stuck on it at frequent intervals, one sheet for each day, is propped against the eaves of the house; the doors are then shut, and the house deserted. As a number of

voracious yamen runners from the "spirit world" have come with the *P'eh* it is necessary to prepare food for them, and the eggs in the jar are supposed to keep them employed trying to get them out with the chopsticks. During this time the "soul," which has come up to the surface, worships the "spirit tablet," its ancestors, and family gods; it also visits the kitchen, and worships the kitchen god. When the family return to the house they examine the fine ashes on the floor, and discover the marks of ropes, chains and the footprints of the "chicken-footed" yamen runners from the spirit world. The sooty side of the kitchen pot also shows marks of mysterious characters where the "soul" has made an attempt to make known to its relatives the nature and extent of its punishment.

PASSPORT FOR HADES.

The belief that the unseen world is very similar to the present one, is common amongst the Chinese; and a good deal of their worship of ancestors is based upon this belief. Paper imitations of houses, furniture, food, servants, money, and every other thing needed in the unseen world are burned for the use of the spirits of the departed. If a person travels abroad in this world he needs a passport; so if he passes through Hades he also needs a passport. There are very many different kinds of these, but those considered of most value are issued from Feng Tu in the Prefecture of Kwei Fu. (The entrance to Hades is commonly believed to be at Feng Tu.)

THE DREAD DAY.

On certain days the front doors of all Yamens are closed, and a table with a wooden tablet with the words,

"Dread Day" (Photo, facing page 15, Fig. 9), is placed in front to prevent anyone entering. These days are "dreaded," because they are the anniversaries of the death of an Emperor or Empress of the reigning family. No official may pass through the front door of the Yamen on these days, but public business is conducted within as usual.

AVOID THE DEAD.

If a person, who was born in the Ing-shen or Si-hai years of the cycle, should die in the 1st, 4th, or 10th months, or a person who was born in the Tsi-ui, Mao-ui, Shen-hsü or Ch'eo-wei years, should die on any day in the 3rd, 5th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 11th or 12th months, then strangers, who are mourners, must not approach the coffin for fear of contracting some disease.

FLOATING OF RIVER LAMPS.

This is one of the many "burial" superstitions which prevail in China.

A large lamp is made in the shape of a boat; and a few hundred sheets of red paper, folded to represent small eyes, are made in the shape of lotus flowers. The bottom of this paper boat is dipped in hot pitch to make it water-tight and then sand rubbed in to give it ballast, a little oil and wick are also placed inside and the lamp is ready. A live duck is first thrown into the river, and anyone who captures it is entitled to keep it. Then the large lamp is floated off and a scramble is made to pull it out of the water again, and the one who secures it bears it off, accompanied by a band of musicians, to the wife of a rich man who has no family. The boat is supposed to bring luck and the blessing of a son. The bearers are rewarded with presents and food. After the large boat

has been landed all the small lamps are lit and floated off, where they act as life boats to the souls of those who have been drowned in the river.

BRINGING HOME THE DECEASED.

Another "burial" superstition is as follows:—

A chair is placed in the front hall ; on it are arranged the clothes, the hat and the spirit tablet of the deceased ; his shoes and socks are placed on the floor in front of the chair, and an umbrella is opened and propped over the back of the chair. Between the chair and the door a representation of the Golden Bridge is made with stools. The priests then lead the soul over the bridge, paying toll in incense and candles to the tablets of the Bridge Guardians. The soul is then supposed to occupy its garments, and worship is paid to it there.

IN CONCLUSION.

The foregoing is only a selection from among the many superstitions of this superstitious people, but it will give some idea of the bondage to which they are subjected, and I trust will stimulate my readers to use their best endeavours to send the Gospel of Christ to this people, and so break the bonds which bind them, and thus lead them into Liberty.

CHINA INLAND MISSION.

(FOUNDED 1885).

Founder : THE LATE J. HUDSON TAYLOR, M.R.C.S.

General Director : D. E. HOSTE.

OBJECT.

The China Inland Mission was formed under a deep sense of China's pressing need, and with an earnest desire, constrained by the love of Christ and the hope of His coming, to obey the command to preach the Gospel to every creature.

CHARACTER.

The Mission is Evangelical, and embraces members of all the leading denominations of Christians.

METHODS.

Duly qualified candidates are accepted without restriction as to denomination, provided they are sound in all the fundamental truths of the faith.

All missionaries go forth in dependence upon God for supplies, without any guarantee of income from the Mission.

The Mission is entirely supported by the free-will offerings of God's people, no personal solicitation or collections being authorised. No more is expended than is thus received, going into debt being considered inconsistent with the principle of entire dependence upon God.

PROGRESS.

On January 1, 1905, there were in connection with the Mission, 825 missionaries and associates (including wives), 21 ordained Chinese pastors, 321 assistant Chinese preachers, 148 Chinese school teachers, 215 Colporteurs, 115 Bible women, and 332 other unpaid Chinese helpers, 12,002 communicants, 18,625 having been baptized from the commencement. There are 200 stations, 521 out-stations, 703 chapels, 418 organised churches, 150 schools, 40 dispensaries, 82 opium refuges, and 7 hospitals.

"China's Millions," the organ of the Mission, published monthly. Illustrated. 1d.; or 1s. 6d. per annum, post free.

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